

Boeing Inducts First EA-18G Growler for U.S. Navy Modification Program



A U.S. Navy EA-18G Growler assigned to Electronic Attack Squadron (VAQ) 139, deployed aboard the aircraft carrier USS Nimitz (CVN 68), flies over the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility, Sept. 30, 2020. U.S. AIR FORCE / Staff Sgt. James Merriman

WHIDBEY ISLAND, Wash. – Boeing has started a five-year modification program for the U.S. Navy’s EA-18G Growler fleet with the induction of the first jet at Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, the company said in a March 19 release.

The modifications are focused on updating the jets’ structural and mission systems architecture, enabling future capability growth for the Navy’s 160 Growler aircraft. Growlers serve a critical role in jamming radar and communications signals of threat forces, disabling their ability to detect and track U.S. and allied military forces.

“We’re excited to have the Growler industry team here working on capabilities that will bring the fleet enhanced electronic surveillance, enhanced data link and the ability to carry the Next-Generation Jammer pod,” said Capt. Chris “Needles” Bahner, commander, Electronic Attack Wing, U.S. Pacific Fleet. “We look forward to being a cooperative partner with PMA-265 and PMA-234 at Naval Air Systems Command and the Growler industry team on this exciting work.”

Following contract awards in October 2020 and February 2021 for materials and labor, the modification work includes various upgrades for Growler mission systems. The aircraft’s ALQ-218 receiver system will receive the Airborne Electronic Attack System Enhancements modification, enabling the Growler

to operate in increasingly complex electromagnetic environments.

Additional modifications will expand the Growler's information pipeline for more rapid and secure data transfer to other aircraft and platforms as well as substantially improve the speed of data processing. Boeing also will prepare the Growler for the Next Generation Jammer, which greatly improves the Growler's electronic attack capability.

"As the world's premier electronic attack platform, we're starting this program for the EA-18G Growler in solid partnership with the Navy," said Mark Sears, Boeing vice president of Fighters and Strike Product Support. "These modifications will position it to meet the threats of today and those in the future."

The program schedule forecasts that all Navy Growlers will be modified in five years. Full rate modification is expected to start in June 2021. Boeing has positioned people onsite at Whidbey, following state, local, customer and corporate COVID-19 protocols, to ensure the program is fully staffed to support the workflow.